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Self-fashioning in Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*: A Bourdieusian Reading

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present article is to investigate Alexander Pope's self-fashioning in the light of Pierre Bourdieu's socio-cultural notion of capitals, specifically the symbolic form. Pope endeavors a lot to gain such a prominent status as the most representative poet of his age. He garners all his artistry, eloquence, savoir-faire, family and social milieu to move towards the center of the canon throughout his life. This upward movement comprises a self-fashioning by Pope which sometimes is the means to facilitate his canonization and sometimes it turns into a goal and an end in itself for him. As the highly acclaimed French philosopher, Pierre Bourdieu highlights the importance of symbolic capital in an individual's social status. Therefore this paper aims at shedding light on Pope's sophisticated act of self-fashioning and its relevance to Pierre Bourdieu's symbolic capital. For this reason, this article discusses Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, an exemplar of his self-fashioning and accumulation of symbolic capital.

Keywords: Alexander Pope; Pierre Bourdieu; symbolic capital; self-fashioning

1. INTRODUCTION

1. 1. Alexander Pope

Pope's earliest education was mostly under the tutelage of priests and he was deprived of pursuing his academic ambitions. He was further isolated and precluded from society due to his Catholicism. At an early point of Pope's life, his family was not even allowed to live in London. His marginalization both socially and academically has played a significant role in his determination towards moving to the center of the canon. "Ever afterwards Pope was struggling back, metaphorically or literally, to the center of things" (Rogers 1). In order to do so, he marshals all his artistry and expertise to secure a high status. Such a trajectory inevitably presupposes a great deal of investment in social interactions and connections, material, mercantile possession, together with a long-lasting disposition towards cultural things, familiarity with cultured people and a good knowledge of literary and cultural productions and so forth. This makes Alexander Pope and his literary works an apt instance to be examined through Bourdieusian notion of different forms of capital specifically the symbolic capital.

1. 2. Symbolic Capital

Unlike other forms of capital, symbolic capital was not initially introduced and expounded upon in the first publications of Bourdieu concerning different forms of capital, specifically, "The Forms of Capital" (1986). Later, he came up with this type of capital by renovating Max Weber's notion of "charismatic authority" (qtd in Pirnajmuddin and Shahbazi 131). Symbolic capital provides its owner with privileges, acknowledgment, power and other different sources based on the elements of honor, prestige and acclaim which are possessed by the owner. "Symbolic capital refers to degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (*connaissance*) and recognition (*reconnaissance*)" (Johnson 7). It engenders a sort of charisma in the agent, which might be misrecognition, and it also legitimatizes the owner's demands of others on their services which could be material such as economic support and other sorts of help or symbolic entities such as respect, reverence and conveying a sense of seniority, status and authority. It is "a form of capital or value that is not recognised as such. Prestige and a glowing reputation, for example, operate as symbolic capital because they mean nothing in themselves, but depend on people believing that someone possesses these qualities" (Webb et al. xv).

Grenfell details two distinct ways with which forms of capital must be recognized and distinguished. First he explains that some social groups enjoy a sort of seniority and privilege in a way that their "values, tastes and life-styles [...] are, in an arbitrary manner, elevated above those of others in a way that confers social advantage (for example, in education)" which confers honorability and respect on these groups. And "in the second way, forms of capital such as cultural capital can be understood in terms of qualitative differences in forms of consciousness within different social groups (class fractions rather than classes in themselves)" (102). Like cultural capital, symbolic capital is acquired through mastery over time and a long duration of development. Another characteristic quality of this form of capital is that this honor and respectability is inseparable from the agent.

This aforementioned quality of symbolic capital that it is recognized as being someone's natural or inherent quality, rather than being acquired through different schemes of social and cultural practice and as a result of educational endeavors, has propelled Bourdieu to define this capital as a misrecognized form of capital. This is not to say that symbolic capital is not a true form of capital; indeed just as other markers of social class and social rank, such as economic and cultural capital, symbolic capital confers distinction and privilege in social fields and, as Webb states, "it legitimates differences in social class and social importance" (152). Therefore, just because it is deemed and supposed to be inherent in the person it is thought to be not a form of capital or a misrecognized form.

For instance, an acclaimed poet who has accumulated social capital through social relations and connections with wide networks of other poets, publishers, and even social, political, cultural figures throughout his career, gaining social acknowledgment and affirmation and reaffirmation in these networks, and at the same time has amassed different forms of cultural capital (embodied, objectified and perhaps even institutionalized) over a long time through slow contact and familiarization with cultural goods and cultured people, and through production of works of art and appropriation of things of cultural significance, is incontrovertibly rich in symbolic capital, since he is now in possession of a great deal of prestige, honor and respectability together with public trust and acclamation. He has not acquired these laurels and titles through independent and distinct symbolic practices but in relation to other forms of capital, while others believe that he possesses such high attributes and qualities, and is worthy of being honored and revered. Symbolic capital is highly

convertible to economic capital and mercantile gain as well. In the case of the poet in our example, as he is known as a prestigious, honorable and highly acclaimed poet, readers' trust in and enthusiasm for his productions are multiplied and therefore his works are better accepted and more welcomed, which in turn gains economic capital for the poet who in many cases pretends to be indifferent to and reluctant to have such a gain by negating and denying the instrumental and economic quality of his symbolic capital.

In *Rules of Art* Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as, "a kind of 'economic' capital denied but recognized, and hence legitimate - a veritable credit, and capable of assuring, under certain conditions and in the long term, 'economic' profits" (142). "The significance of symbolic capital lies in its apparent negation of economic capital. Symbolic capital is a form of power that is not perceived as power but as legitimate demands (or recognition, deference, obedience, or the services of others)" (Swartz 90).

2. DISCUSSION

2. 1. Symbolic Capital and Self-Fashioning in Pope

Pope's fame and his aspiration to accumulate prestige honor and fame is an undeniable fact which has been proved not only by the bulk of his literary productions, but also by his own conscious act of self-fashioning in some of his works.

The idea of Pope's concern for symbolic capital is quite traceable in the self-fashioning observable in his works. He seems to have a great predilection for revealing and introducing his Self and identity to the public in a grave manner. As Rogers states, "We see Alexander Pope as an isolated hero, forging his own desperate sense of identity in a world threatening the stable order of civilization which he admired" (150). His gifts in writing and extraordinary finesse of style are advertised in most of his works such as *Pastorals*. "The fact was that the *Pastorals* were deliberately intended to make Pope's name. They were a diploma piece, setting out their author's credentials to the cultivated world" (Rogers 20). Yet the *Pastorals* were not his only step towards self-fashioning for him. His letters are also instances of fashioning himself as a great writer of his age.

Although a consideration of Pope's letters lies beyond the scope of this study, but a few words on his letters could be helpful in relation to his self-fashioning and accumulation of symbolic capital. These letters were written to different people, to statesmen and Earls such as the Earl of Orrery, the Second Earl of Oxford and to contemporary poets such as Swift. As Rogers explains, Pope's "early correspondence is full of learned trifling, and attempts to portray himself in the guise of a rake. Later he wrote more seriously on religious and philosophic subjects [...] others deal with connoisseurship and antiquarian matters" (Rogers 71). Pope introduces himself as a connoisseur of poetry by discussing the craft and art of poetry in such letters to add to his stock of honor and prestige. As Hunter puts it,

No one, before or since, has thoroughly dominated the British realm of letters as did Pope for nearly three decades. The age for a third of a century was his in virtually every sense – his was the power, glory, talent, watermark and market canniness – and even though many despised, attacked and belittled him, hardly anyone doubted that he was the most gifted and accomplished poet of his time, whatever one thought of his ideas, politics, character and personality. (207)

Pope's values, taste, and life-style are elevated above all his contemporaries and throughout most of his works especially his *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* he seeks to manifest this superiority by giving an account of his life, literary career and critics.

2. 2. *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* and Pope's Self-fashioning

Self-fashioning in Pope is obtrusive and conscious and he endeavors to personalize most of his poems in order to instigate and preserve a high-ranking status for himself in the eighteenth century canon. In Maner's words,

It is commonplace to point out the depersonalizations implicit in Pope's use of imitations as a literary form; it is less often pointed out that he frequently and obtrusively personalizes these poems, and that he seems to be less ironic when presenting his own character as a satirist [...] Pope, who is usually regarded as the prime example of an Augustan master of rhetorical impersonality, constantly puts himself forward, without disguise and without ironic intent, as a reliable and admirable man. (560)

One of the most remarkable feats of his endeavors for a perfect self-portrait is that of *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* which could be read as a response to the contemporary criticism and an example of Pope's self-glorification. As one of his most acclaimed poems, it also stands for Pope's portrait of his symbolic capital in possession and a preservation of his identity against all the attacks on him. Maresca who compares this poem with Pope's other Horatian Satires believes that *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* is "concerned with defending Pope and his writings from false and vicious allegations" (73).

The poem is addressed to Dr. John Arbuthnot, the royal physician of Queen Anne and a man of wit, who was a member of the Scriblerus Club together with Pope. The very act of addressing a noble man such as Dr. Arbuthnot, who is said to be so sophisticated and gentle, associates Pope with nobility and virtue as a result of such a friendship and correspondence. It is a response to Arbuthnot's letter to Pope concerning his imminent death and the pieces of advice he gave to Pope on writing satire in the earlier correspondences. As Baines explains,

The *Epistle* gave Pope the opportunity to cement together various ideas, scenes and sketches, under the general category of a poet's complaint to a friend about the corruption of the current poetic scene and his victimization within it. It is perhaps Pope's most complex self-portrait, as well as his most calculated battle-plan. (37-38)

In the advertisement to this work Pope states the occasion of writing it as 'a Sort of Bill of Complaint', written in response to those who had attacked not only his 'person, morals' but also his family and his literary works. And above all, "Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1735) is, in effect, his apologia for his life of writing" (Hunter 192). This work is not only concerned with Pope's defense of his literary career and it is not merely a counterattack on the hacks. Here Pope endeavors to set some standards for a good poet, a good patron and 'legitimate' religious, cultural and social conducts.

He initiates his defense from the advertisement. Pope says,

'...Whereof to those who know me not, a truer Information maybe requisite. Being divided between the Necessity to say something of Myself ... If it have any thing pleasing, it will be that by which I am most desirous to

please, the Truth and the Sentiment; and if any thing offensive, it will be only to those I am least sorry to offend, the Vicious or the Ungenerous... Many will know their own picture in it, there being not a Circumstance but what is true;

He uses the word 'truth' several times in this advertisement and thus by maintaining a stance of truth Pope associates his self, his identity and his art with that of truth while rejecting his opponents as vicious and 'ungenerous' and he proffers a defense and a self-fashioning of himself as a necessity. In fact the whole poem can be regarded as a manifesto of Pope's symbolic capital, honor and prestige, presented with an extensive dedication and homage to truth.

Shut, shut the door, good John! fatigu'd, I said,
Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead.
The dog-star rages! nay 'tis past a doubt,
All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out:
...
By land, by water, they renew the charge;
They stop the chariot, and they board the barge. (1-10)

The first section of the poem opens with reference to Pope's contemporaries who have paid him great compliment which he renders as pretentious and vain or those who have criticized him so severely. For him there is no refuge to seek in order to escape such detractors and flatterers. He is addressing his gardener here to stop the rage of his foolish contemporaries by saying that no one is in the house, 'Tie up the knocker, Say I'm sick, I'm dead'. Many of Pope's contemporaries drew some pictures of Pope as an outcast in a deformed shape mostly in the company of animals. Here this passage could be considered as a vehement response to such allegations. In the words of Baines,

Partly this is comic exaggeration, the first means of rebutting Hervey's assertions that Pope was a friendless outcast: he has only too many so-called 'friends' (a more lasting answer to the charge is registered by the pervasive dialogue with the true friend Arbuthnot, and by the catalogue of those by whom he is 'belov'd' at 135-44). (111)

This swarm of mad poets which were Pope's detractors, associated with Bedlam and also his admirers, wittingly associated with mythic poets of sacred Mount Parnassus, is an indication of Pope's attempt to glorify his honor and prestige as a poet of great status, since either way, whether for flattery or for mad criticism, Pope's position as poet in the center of the canon is stressed here. As stated earlier one of the functions of symbolic capital is that it legitimates differences and gives seniority in social importance and in social class. Therefore, it is Pope's symbolic capital accumulated throughout his entire life that has attracted all this criticism and admiration by his contemporaries.

These people, "All fly to Twit'nam." And:

If foes, they write, if friends, they read me dead.
Seiz'd and tied down to judge, how wretched I!
Who can't be silent, and who will not lie (32-34)

The poetasters ask Pope to approve and comment on their poems. He introduces himself as a popular judge of poetry who is so righteous and incorruptible that he cannot tell lies by commending their works and yet is unwilling to hurt them by exposing the absurdity of their poems. However, he is the one who eventually gives counsel to the 'Unwilling ears' of such poets as he tells them, 'Keep your piece nine years,' before publishing them. Thus, he places himself in the position of such classical writers as Horace, by giving counsel and by judging poetry of such writers no matter what status they have. Mengel notes that, "but in the comedy there is submerged a serious reference to Pope as a martyr" which in turn amplifies Pope's attempts to fashion himself as a victim of his own fame and greatness (530).

In the following lines Pope presents an account of the flatterers from 'Grub Street,' who paid him tributes, which he considers vain. One of the most significant passages which is quite pertinent to Pope's self-portrait is that of this Grub Street flatterer:

There are, who to my person pay their court:
I cough like Horace, and, though lean, am short,
Ammon's great son one shoulder had too high,
Such Ovid's nose, and, 'Sir! you have an eye' — (115-18)

Although mocking and self-deprecating on the surface, this passage reveals Pope's own predilection to portray his status as that of the classical writers. As Mengel states, "although this is probably the most comic passage in the poem, still there is a serious heroic suggestion here in that these suitors (to be sure for the most absurd reasons) do class him with the highest poets and even couple him with Alexander the Great" (532). He admits that such flatteries are in exchange for bribery, subscription or Pope's patronage. However, what Pope is keen on conveying here is that what makes him comparable to such above-mentioned colossi, is his artistry, sound judgment and greatness. Pope himself uses some quotations from classical writers, as the above-mentioned counsel on, 'writing poetry for nine years before publishing any piece,' since he identifies himself and thinks of himself as a great writer, worthy of being compared with Horace.

Why did I write? what sin to me unknown
Dipp'd me in ink, my parents', or my own?
As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came.
I left no calling for this idle trade,
No duty broke, no father disobey'd. (125-30)

"For the numbers came" implies that Pope wants to fashion himself as a genius. The point is that he could not help becoming the great poet he has become. In other words, he intimates that he was destined to become the heir to great masters of the past, hence his allusions to classical colossi. As stated earlier, one of the reasons for symbolic capital to be introduced as the 'misrecognized form' by Bourdieu is that, he believes symbolic capital is something inherent in the agent. It is not acquired through any specific individual act but rather accumulated based on and in relation with other forms of capital. This is manifest in Pope and in his claim of his craft of writing as an inherent ability. Pope implies that the honor and prestige that his works and his status are imbued with is something innate and natural in him. As Baines states, "This parody of baptism, with its overtones of original sin, is immediately redeemed by the image of Pope as the poet who is born, not made" (113).

He frequently associates himself with Horace and other great writers. The very fact that he is writing poetry as a defense for his life and literary career places him among the literary luminaries of all times.

However, it could be claimed that poetry is what Pope considers vital. It is the means through which, as a virtuous man who feels responsible for the good and evil in the society, he can attack the follies of figures who are considered as the bards or even the prophets of the society. Pope utilizes this prerogative and opportunity to unveil evil and to extend the good among those who are the most responsible for the path the society takes, namely the poets. As Sowerby states, Pope “considered poetry as the business of his life; and, however he might seem to lament his occupation, he followed it with constancy” (1).

In the next passage, in line with the structure of the poem, Arbuthnot interrupts and asks Pope why he has published such works to be highly criticized and Pope states that:

Well – natured Garth inflamed with early praise,
And Congreve loved, and Swift endured my lays;
The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read,
Even mitred Rochester would nod the head,
...
Happy my studies, when by these approved!
Happier their author, when by these beloved! (137-44)

As a reason to justify publishing his works, Pope here refers to the individuals who have encouraged and approved of his poems. Among these people, are the poets, William Congreve, Jonathon Swift, Granville, Garth and Walsh, and also statesmen and patrons included Talbot, Duke of Shrewsbury, Lord Sommers and Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham. This catalogue of colossi also represents Francis Atterbury who was the Bishop of Rochester. These luminaries are described above as ‘Great Dryden’s Friends,’ which implies that now they approve of Pope and hold him in such high status like that of Dryden and thus considering Pope as an apt successor to Dryden.

This passage is a manifestation of the social capital possessed by Pope through being acknowledged by poets and patrons of such rank and also the prestige and honor or the symbolic capital that he is granted with as a result of such acquaintances and the way they express their approval of him.

To continue our discussion, we should also consider Pope’s social capital and its significance in his ascent to fame in relation to his self-fashioning. Concerning the above-mentioned passage in this *Epistle*, the reason for listing this group of important contemporary writers is to highlight Pope’s possession of social capital, this network of friends based on mutual acknowledgment and recognition, who support him and never cease to provide him with credit and praise. When his works are validated and approved of by such eminent poets of the age, he can be sure that such works are undoubtedly better trusted and more accepted by the readership. Therefore, Pope, before publication, has such acclaimed friends read and comment on his poems to ensure his path to fame through the social capital which he has accumulated by investing time and enjoying an invaluable membership to the great community of the poets, politicians and statesmen.

This proves Pope’s sagacity in making the publishers and subscribers more willing and avid in their entreaty to convince Pope to associate with them. This fact manifests that Pope had accumulated a great deal of symbolic capital which compelled publishers to subscribe to him. As Hunter states the

private-circulation paradigm (though fading) continued into the eighteenth century: the young Pope, barely twenty-one when his first poems were published, was already regarded as a major poet because everyone whose critical opinion mattered in London had read and admired his poetry before it saw print. Publication sometimes followed from fame, rather than creating it. (165)

This results in the fact that Pope's prestige, honor and fame would be established and advertised, even before the publication of the works. Therefore Pope first tries to raise a large amount of symbolic capital which facilitates his path to be more successful in publishing his works and more acclaimed among other poets.

Baines tries to shed more light on Pope's question 'Why then Publish?' (135):

The answer is that the publication that matters has already happened, for Pope's early friends would all 'tell me I could write' (Arb, 136): the list of early critics (Granville, Walsh, Garth, Congreve, Swift and so on) is here arranged in a decorous gallery of supporters who combine private friendship with a sort of publication circle. The request of such friends to publish (in contradistinction to the hack's imaginary friends at 44) cannot be denied. (113)

Baines believes that such approvals are the touchstone by which his works are to be judged and not the hostile criticism by such hack writers and dunces such as Gildon or Dennis, who, as Pope states, are provoked to attack him, based on either their madness ('Bedlam') or for want of money and mercenary publications ('Mint').

Pope insists that it is his poetry which exposes the follies and the flaws of the hacks:

All these my modest satire bade translate,
And own'd that nine such poets made a Tate (189-90)

As a requisite and rudimentary characteristic of an unimpeachable and honorable character, foppish behavior is renounced by Pope:

I thought no homage from the Race the write;
I kept, like *Asian* monarchs, from their sight; (219-20)

He clearly distinguishes himself from those 'puppy'-like poets who endeavor to satisfy the needs of the patrons. He does not consider himself as pretentious like those poets who please their patrons by groveling gestures. He is in fact repelled by the race of writers who pay homage to and flatter patrons such as Bufo. The next passage is an elaborate criticism of such patrons epitomized by Bufo:

Dryden alone (what wonder?) came not nigh,
Dryden alone escap'd this judging eye:
But still the great have kindness in reserve,
He help'd to bury whom he help'd to starve. (245-248)

Pope continues to justify his sharp satiric verses, and to explicate to Dr. Arbuthnot the reasons for writing earlier polemics and to manifest the true pictures of these hack writers by referring to a typical patron as Bufo.

What Pope attempts to convey here is that he is distinguished from and disgusted with two groups of people. First he presents the servile portrait of those poets he deems inferior and low-rank, and then gives us a detailed image of Bufo and his character.

As one of the most negative qualities of Pope's inferiors and rivals, Bufo's egotism which is more "Puff'd" and intensified by the hack writers' quills," is mocked and rebuked in the first lines.

Bufo thinks so highly of himself, when he is praised by low rank poets 'all day long,' who in their songs and tributes equal him to great classical colossus such as Horace. His sham of sophistication and good taste is satirized by referring to the 'busts,' torsos and the statues of great writers such as Pindar.

The poets whom Pope has been satirizing are those who employ all their wit in 'an undistinguish'd race' to flatter and praise Bufo. First they ask him to be a judge of their poems, and then they demand some positions. In exchange, they flatter him, his picture and even his seat unceasingly.

Bufo is kind to some of these hack writers by offering 'port', by praising some, and even by paying money to some of them as a generous patron. Pope disdains the very idea of the patronage of such people.

Dryden and other great poets tried to avoid ("came not nigh") such patrons. Ironically, Pope states that Bufo is the same person who did pay no heed to Dryden as he was alive, never helped him but just "help'd to starve", while after Dryden's death, contributed immensely to the lavish funeral which was given to the great poet. In a way Pope is identifying himself with John Dryden in disdaining such so-called patrons. Indeed, it was the case in Pope's life, since he never sought patronage from the statesmen or courtiers:

And see what friends, and read what books I please.
Above a patron, though I condescend
Sometimes to call a Minister my friend: (264-266)

Pope here presents a more personal picture of himself and his beliefs. First he states that bad poets have found such good matches as bad patrons. Bad poets accompany bad patrons, as in this poem Bavius who is seemingly a bad poet flatters a bad patron as Bufo.

However, in Pope's opinion, this perfect match works out to his benefit in that, first of all, he gets rid of all the hack writers and dunces, since they intend to flatter the patrons, and also he is left alone to continue his life the way he is more inclined to do and this obviates confronting either group. Ironically, Pope appreciates the "Great" patrons who attract and take away the hack writers.

He celebrates his freedom from such spear carriers of the literature stage and lightweights of the eighteenth century patronage world. However he also condemns the same people for neglecting such great talents of the time as John Gay who deserves to be patronized and praised.

Another reason, here, for the reference to Gay could be that Pope intends to present the sort of social capital that he has been accumulating. He associates himself with such literary luminaries as Gay who is considered a real genius, while denouncing his contemporary nonentities such as Bavius or Bufo. To build up his honor and prestige more, Pope claims that in order to 'maintain a poet's dignity,' one needs to be free from such people. Thus, here he pictures himself as the true embodiment of a dignified, emancipated and honorable poet. The kind of life that Pope has is 'above a patron'. Nonetheless, he does make some references to some people of high social, economic or political significance. He calls these important people friends not patrons.

In Pope's case, it is a relationship based on mutual respect, acknowledgment and recognition, which is ennobling and not based on the obsequious flattery or groveling to please people, which is downgrading.

Pope fashions his virtuous self in all aspects of life; the line, "I pay my debts, believe, and say my pray'rs" (268) very effectively indicates how much the order, rules and the orthodoxies of the society matter to Pope. Raised up a Catholic, he strictly respects and observes the rules of society, civility and religion.

Another issue which throws into high relief Pope's prestige and sense of greatness is that he is free from court and politicians. This way, he can have his favorite type of life and he does not have to sacrifice his art and talents to please a few, he can maintain his beliefs and standards in his works. Furthermore, there is no obligation for him to be always busy thinking of new poems constantly to please the patrons.

Why am I ask'd what next shall see the light?
Heav'ns! was I born for nothing but to write?
Has life no joys for me? or (to be grave)
Have I no friend to serve, no soul to save? (271-274)

Ironically, he first censures and curses his destiny to have become a writer who can do nothing else but only to write. This innate ability has exposed him to the public eyes which never cease to monitor and criticize him.

This sort of public attention and scrutiny, which is totally in line with the first part of the poem, has turned into something very deplorable. That is why Pope pities himself. Yet, on the other hand, this passage is a sort of self-glorification in the sense that, first of all, he considers his art and talents as something innate and natural to him; he claims that he has been born with this artistry and this is a gift which must be admired and glorified indeed. Pope here also states how willingly people gossip about even his meetings with other luminaries of the time. This is again his symbolic capital that confers him distinction and difference in social class and social importance.

One of the poets Pope attacks and against whom he fashions himself, is Lord Harvey, who as stated earlier, severely censured Pope and his writing in a severe way. Here, he is identified as Sporus:

Let Sporus tremble – "What? that thing of silk,
Sporus, that mere white curd of ass's milk?
...
His wit all see-saw, between *that* and *this*,
Now high, now low, now Master up, now Miss. (305-24)

He is depicted as the poet who is bereft of any sense and understanding of satire, his criticisms are caustic and bestial. He is tasteless and indifferent to beauty and people who are endowed with intellect and wit are stung and repulsed by his remarks and verses. One of the most negative qualities abhorred by Pope and censured here in the character of Sporus is that of hypocrisy. He is described as a man of antitheses, full of contradictions and double faced. His ambivalent sexuality between 'this' and 'that' is also ridiculed. "Sporus destroys the meaning and efficacy of true poetry: he has tainted the imaginative faculty and debased it. Bufo eliminates the possibility of true poets surviving or even existing: he patronizes flatterers and starves Dryden" (Maresca 82).

Having reached this climactic point of abhorrence for Harvey and having catalogued all the deviant, negative characteristics, what follows in the next part of the poem is a celebration of Pope's incorruptible virtues. "Upon reaching this pitch of feeling Pope drops for good his mask of irony and shows himself the solemn and righteous man" (Mengel 535).

Not fortune's worshipper, nor fashion's fool,
 Not lucre's madman, nor ambition's tool,
 Not proud, nor servile, be one poet's praise,
 That, if he pleas'd, he pleas'd by manly ways;
 That flatt'ry, even to kings, he held a shame,
 And thought a lie in verse or prose the same:
 That not in fancy's maze he wander'd long (334- 340)

With a very exalted and efficacious style, Pope gives a third-person account of himself. He presents himself as the righteous man of letters. "After the gender ambivalences of *Sporus* we are given Pope's 'manly ways', and manly ways indicate an heroic poetry which considers flattery shameful, truth superior to 'Fancy's Maze', Virtue better than Fame. Pope defines himself against the whole range of corrupt social practices into which *Sporus* pours his energies" (Baines 118).

As opposed to these people and hack writers who are depicted as materialistic, Pope declares that he has never written any verse for the sake of money. He also states that he is not influenced by the fashion of the time such as flattering the courtiers and statesmen. He has never been egocentric and imperious to others. Unlike the hack writers, he does not act with servility but does all he intends to say and write very honorably and respectfully. To Pope, as an honorable poet, flattery, even to kings and nobles, is shameful and downgrading, and if he pleased anyone by his poetry, he pleased them in a sincere and direct way.

Although he writes in the style and after the classical writings of *apologia*, he sometimes even goes beyond this and his poetry turns into a means of self-presentation; that is because self-fashioning and symbolic capital of prestige and honor are of paramount significance to him. Maner in an article investigating the satiric personae in Byron and Pope, states that although Pope's satires are Horatian, he is a bit different from Horace in that despite Horace, he puts himself in the center of his poems becoming the satiric persona of the poem. Horace "shows us the virtue he recommends by portraying Lucilius as a model of the frank and open writer, but Pope transfers his praise to himself" (Maner 561). And sometimes he does fashion himself by deprecating his critics' and detractors' attributions and characteristics.

Mengel is one of the critics who have surveyed patterns of imagery in the poem. "Five main images emerge, all connected in a kind of evolution: animal-filth-disease-persecution-virtuous man. The animal image yields the filth, the noxious element out of which disease arises, disease turns into persecution, and persecution reveals the virtuous man"(Mengel 528). That is quite pertinent to Pope's self-fashioning in this poem since he is indeed listing all his critics, his detractors, people who have libeled him unfairly and his disease to portray himself as a man who is dealing with all these.

What Pope is after here, it could be argued, is symbolic capital. As Johnson states: "symbolic capital refers to degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (*connaissance*) and recognition (*reconnaissance*)"(7). Alexander Pope in this epistle endeavors to present and advertise his literary and social life to gain prestige and recognition. What has been ailing him throughout his life, beside his life-long disease is the brazen vulgarity of the hack writers and his

detractors who are indefatigable in their vilification and persecution. Therefore, Pope by attacking their follies and by presenting his social, cultural, economic status together with the network of the well-reputed friends whom he associates himself with consolidates his honor, prestige and social recognition. This social recognition plays a significant role in accumulating consecration and symbolic capital for Pope.

Symbolic capital “is a form of power that is not perceived as power but as legitimate demands (or recognition, deference, obedience, or the services of others)” (Swartz 90).

Bourdieu calls this form of capital a “misrecognized form of capital,” not meaning that it is not a form of capital but rather as Webb notes, “a form of capital or value that is not recognized as such” (xv). As Webb further explains, “prestige and a glowing reputation, for example, operate as symbolic capital because they mean nothing in themselves, but depend on people believing that someone possesses these qualities” (xv). The social recognition that *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* generates for Pope, makes people believe in such characteristics and it makes them attribute more honor, prestige and consecration to him. Symbolic capital “legitimizes differences in social class and social importance” (Webb 152) and this is exactly what Pope achieves by this poem and by molding such reverential image of his life, art and culture.

Bourdieu states that, “Symbolic capital, that is to say, capital—in whatever form—insofar as it is represented, i.e., apprehended symbolically, in a relationship of knowledge or, more precisely, of misrecognition and recognition, presupposes the intervention of the habitus, as a socially constituted cognitive capacity” (*Distinction* 56). Habitus which is the social structures embodied in the agent is central to the agent’s pursuit of symbolic capital and the practices the individual engages in to accumulate this kind of capital. Bourdieu believes that habitus is both a structured form and also a structuring drive for the agent. The conditions and the society structure habitus, and in turn it structures the practices of the individual.

As a result, an agent’s manners and practices to accumulate any form of capital, specifically symbolic capital, are structured by the habitus. “To put it more simply, symbolic capital is the intrinsic knowledge of how and when to employ manners in order to achieve social distinction by demonstrating superior taste, and those manners and tastes themselves are embodied in habitus” (Adrienne 27).

Symbolic capital is subject to complicated regulations for the production of new inequalities and power relations. From this perspective any free and independent intellectual standing in a supposedly neutral position toward society is an illusion. Economic and cultural capitals are crucial conditions for the realization of social capital, that is, the network of relations and liabilities that inform the *habitus*. (M. Green et al., 172)

3. CONCLUSIONS

In this *Epistle* not only are the current conditions, such as the tastelessness of the poets, the hack writers, the conceited patrons and the social conditions, which structure the habitus, are set forth and elaborated, but also Pope’s own habitus which is highly endowed with sophistication, ‘legitimate’ taste and elegance, is in a way rather advertised and fashioned against those hack writers and mediocre poets and critics. In order for Pope to be able to accumulate a great deal of symbolic capital, he needs to foreground all those inherent and embodied social structures, characteristics and tastes. That explains why he speaks of poetry and his finesse talent in poetry as natural and innate which structures his social practices

towards gaining more symbolic capital by creating more literary masterpieces. Conversely, the habitus of his opponents and detractors such as Sporus, Bufo, Sappho, and others is shown to be low and bereft of any virtues, truthfulness and sophistication.

In order to gain this symbolic capital and establish a proper intellectual, cultural, literary and social status for himself in the society, Pope fashions himself, his literary career and his social life both positively – by identifying with luminaries of the time – and negatively, against all that he considers to be abominable, vapid and tasteless in his detractors and some social and political figures. Social recognition and consecration through accumulation of symbolic capital is what Pope endeavors to obtain in this poem.

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